

and I have to admit to
feeling a certain envy of him
having no such succinct code to live by
I bring him a damp cloth for his arm
and he lights another cigaret
after awhile Blithering Jack comes back
as usual he gives me some things for
babysitting his boy then they leave

La Cienega, 1957

L'ENFANCE D'UN CHEF

Sandoz worked the west 40 too
he was made to carry the bull food in a quiver
he found it cumbersome but continued
he liked to watch the sun's progress during the course of
a day
& to rehearse the songs he had learned as a boy

The massa had his own skeetshooting trap
on a handsome rocky point overlooking a bend of the river
it was up behind the large and spacious ranch house
his foreman was 84 years old and nearly blind
he got young girls from the town and screwed them
in the pinons all over the ranch
Sandoz heard Slim had to go to the doctor a lot

Sandoz worried an awful lot about the twin villages
down in the valley west of the ranch
there was one wagon track that went in there
one year it got washed out it was never replaced
Sandoz worried about those people as he rode along
he wondered could they grow enuff food
& what would they do if their crops failed
times like that he did not feel like singing

The ruins of an ancient pueblo
stood in an almost hidden corner of the ranch
when he felt blue Sandoz would go sit in the kiva
or that dark room that had been their kiva
it was a gloomy place that smelled bad
but Sandoz didn't mind the odors
nor the condoms left there by the boys from the town
it was a good place to shelter from the rain
he could hear the scream in nearby arroyos
always here rain meant flash floods
and maybe stock would be drowned

He sat and listened
he sat & looked at the crumbling walls
in the dim light till his eye sockets hurt

he thought of his toenails growing inexorably
down there in his boots
he also thought of his mother
& of his father too
they had taught him many songs

One day Sandoz had had to kill many snakes
he did not like to do this but they threatened the stock
also they could injure his own horse
he was thinking of these things as he stopped
at the river to gather a drink
as his eyes followed his cupped hands he saw
a snake in the water it was looking at him
he mounted and road off
still thirsty

Sandoz could not tell the authorities
how large the ranch was when they came and asked
his first job there had been to ride fence
all he knew was that it had taken seven weeks
to ride the perimeter of the place
he got a little paranoid at first
though of course he didn't know that word
he thought maybe Slim had meant to just leave him out
there

but then Sandoz had faith and enuff food
plus the songs he had learned as a boy

The Collector

he starts out each day with gin and speed
then drives to "the other house" where he
walks in the gardens for one half-hour
seeing no people speaking to no thing
save the one bluebird he trusts
he spends \$30 a month for sunflowerseed
and more than that for plants and flowers
often he performs the transplants himself
his houses and grounds are constantly
undergoing major alterations or paint
or architecturally bizarre enlargements
he has bridges built over tiny streams
also a gazebo in the midst of an orange grove
he concludes his morning excursion
by pissing on the hollyhock behind his office
it is almost twenty feet tall now
with a lovely strawberry bloom
then he goes into the mansion (TITANIA LIBRARY
his cards read: An Empire of Important Books)
where he sits at the world's most disorganized desk
as long as he can remain motionless
he uses the phone and opens the mail there
but its principle function is as shelter